

**TOPIC 22: WEIGHT LOSS AND DIABETES****STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

When someone has type 2 diabetes, being overweight or obese increases their risk for complications and can make treating their diabetes more difficult. Obesity, or too much fat, makes existing insulin resistance worse. Losing as little as 5-10% of body weight (or 10-20 pounds) by eating less calories and engaging in physical activity can help with diabetes control and reduce the risk of associated health problems. If weight loss is not needed or is not possible, maintaining weight is a reasonable goal as well. Even clients currently at a healthy weight need to manage their weight to prevent weight gain. Obesity is often defined by Body Mass Index (BMI). Healthy weight is defined as a BMI of 19-24.9; Overweight is 25-29.9; and Obesity is defined as a BMI greater than 30.

**KEY MESSAGES**

1. Weight loss or weight management is a part of diabetes lifestyle behavior change that improves blood sugars and prevents complications.
2. Even modest weight loss (10-20 pounds or 5-10% of current body weight) improves blood glucose control and blood cholesterol.
3. For some people, preventing weight gain may be a more appropriate and more reasonable goal.
4. While we can lose weight by reducing how much we eat, research shows that regular physical activity is needed to maintain weight loss.
5. A balanced diet is the first priority for all weight loss plans.
6. Weight loss strategies that eliminate or limit food groups, such as low-carbohydrate diets are not appropriate for people with diabetes over the long term.
7. Weight loss and weight management are lifelong processes.

**BACKGROUND**

An increase in body fat most often results in more insulin resistance—meaning that the body's cells are less able to take up glucose from the blood to use for energy. Being overweight or obese may also lead to increased blood pressure and blood cholesterol levels. Many people with diabetes have high blood pressure and cholesterol levels.

For people with type 2 diabetes, eating fewer calories and a small amount of weight loss will improve both insulin resistance and day-to-day blood glucose levels. Being physically active also improves the body's ability to use insulin and should be a part of all weight management plans. In addition, regular physical activity will help maintain weight loss.

Strategies that will help with weight loss include keeping track of food intake, planning meals and snacks ahead of time, and creating a menu to plan daily meals. Eating on a regular schedule helps with controlling hunger as well as blood glucose.

Recognizing and controlling food triggers—the situations or emotions that cause us to eat when we are not hungry—is another important part of successful weight loss plan. Once we can identify what these triggers are, we can make a plan to avoid them or deal with them in a healthier way.

Finally, it is important to recognize that maintaining a weight loss over the long term is challenging for most people. It is important to recognize that changes to diet and physical activity need to be permanent changes that will last a lifetime.

## DISCUSSION POINTS FOR CLIENTS

Successful weight loss or weight gain prevention strategies include:

- Changing habits can be hard. Start with one change and build on your success. For example, if you currently drink beverages that are high in calorie, (soda, juice, etc.), switch to water.
- Keep track of what you eat and look up the calories to learn more about your current eating patterns. Continue to keep track of the food you eat and how much you exercise to help with weight loss or maintenance.
- Establish a pattern of meals that meet your individual schedule and preferences.
- Eat at least 3 times a day on a regular schedule. If you include snacks in your diabetes meal plan, eat smaller portions at main meals.
- Do not eliminate food groups in order to lose weight quickly. Instead, choose smaller portions from all food groups.
- Losing weight too quickly is not good for you and the weight loss is often harder to maintain.
- Be realistic about your weight loss goal. A good goal is 1-2 pounds a week at most. Reducing your calorie intake by too much may result in less weight loss over time because your body adapts and may actually use fewer calories.
- Popular diets such as low-carbohydrate diets may result in rapid weight loss, but the only way to maintain a healthy weight is to make permanent lifestyle changes in the way you eat and exercise.
- Most people who successfully lose weight are physically active at least 60 minutes on most days of the week. You do not have to do this all at once, but can break up this into 10 minute sessions throughout the day.
- Become aware of what causes you to overeat.. Make a plan about what to do in place of eating. Get support from family or friends.
- If you are eating less and exercising more, you might be at risk for low blood sugars. You may need to decrease some of your diabetes medications to avoid hypoglycemia. It is important to talk to your health care provider about how to do this.
- Seek support from professionals. You can ask your provider to refer you to a registered dietitian for help in meal planning.

## PATIENT OUTCOMES/GOALS

By the end of the educational session, the client with diabetes will be able to:

- Recognize that long-term weight loss and weight management are challenging for individuals with or without diabetes.

- Recognize that successful weight loss requires lifestyle and behavior changes that occur over time and often in small steps.
- Recognize that reducing calorie intake as well as increasing physical activity or exercise are both necessary to maintain weight loss.
- Understand that healthful food choices and meal patterns are important to maintain when trying to manage their weight.
- Identify resources and people you can rely on to support you in your weight management plan.
- Make a meal and exercise plan to lose or manage your weight that takes into account personal preferences, cultural norms, and availability of resources.
- Understand that some of your diabetes medications may need to be adjusted if you reduce food intake and increase exercise.
- Talk to your health care provider about your plan for weight loss.

CHW ACTIONS	PARTICIPANT ACTIONS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ask the participant what type of changes they are making to lose weight.</li> <li>• Assist the client in identifying foods and beverages that they are high in calories.</li> <li>• Assist the participant in identifying resources to help with weight management.</li> <li>• Ask the participant if they are aware of which diabetes medications may need to be adjusted with less food intake and more exercise.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify reasonable weight loss goals.</li> <li>• Identify where changes should be made in eating patterns to begin reducing calorie intake.</li> <li>• Identify resources that will support their weight management goals.</li> <li>• Make a plan for regular meals and portions that is compatible with their lifestyle and preferences.</li> <li>• Write down questions to discuss with your health care provider at the next visit.</li> <li>• Ask provider for a referral to a registered dietitian for meal-planning assistance.</li> </ul>

## TOOLS/TEACHING AIDES

- Measuring cups

## HANDOUTS

1. **Topic 22 Coversheet**.....[English](#) | [Spanish](#)
2. **Tips for Weight Loss** .....[English](#) | [Spanish](#)  
Source: [Public Health – Seattle & King County](#)
3. **Action Plan**.....[English](#) | [Spanish](#)  
Source: [Public Health – Seattle & King County](#)

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## REFERENCES

American Diabetes Association. <http://www.diabetes.org/food-and-fitness>

Standards of Medical Care in Diabetes 2013. American Diabetes Association. Diabetes Care, Volume 36, Supplement 1, January 2013.

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